

Policy: Requests for special consideration

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Purpose

This document sets out the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's (the Board's) policy on requests for special consideration from internationally qualified nursing and midwifery examination candidates (candidates) undertaking multiple choice question (MCQ) examinations or objective structured clinical examinations (OSCE) as part of the outcomes-based assessment (OBA) pathway.

Scope

This policy applies to requests for special consideration from candidates undertaking MCQ examinations or OSCEs as part of the OBA pathway.

This document contains information on:

- the circumstances in which a request for special consideration will be accepted
- how requests for special consideration must be submitted
- how requests for special consideration are assessed
- possible outcomes from requests for special consideration, and
- next steps if a candidate is dissatisfied with the outcome.

Policy

The Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Committee (Assessment of overseas qualified nurses and midwives) (NMAC), established by the Board, oversees the OBA. The NMAC will monitor requests for special consideration. The NMAC will ensure requests are assessed promptly in accordance with this document and that outcomes are fair. The NMAC will make recommendations and/or give advice to the Board on this policy and associated matters.

Requesting special consideration

Candidates who do not attend or complete their scheduled examination without providing sufficient notice as specified in the relevant candidate examination handbook can contact the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) directly to request special consideration. Any request for special consideration must be submitted to Ahpra in writing within seven calendar days after the date of the candidate's scheduled examination. The candidate must include any supporting evidence described in this document with their request.

Reasons for requesting special consideration

Special consideration may be requested when a candidate was unable to attend or complete their scheduled examination due to unplanned circumstances beyond their control, without providing sufficient notice as specified in the relevant candidate examination handbook. Only candidates who can demonstrate that the circumstances that prevented them from attending or completing their scheduled examination were unplanned and beyond their control are eligible for special consideration.

Possible circumstances that are unplanned and beyond a candidate's control include:

- acute illness or injury (such as hospital admission, onset of serious and/or infectious illness) – the request must include a medical certificate which explicitly states that the candidate was not fit to undertake the exam and the specific date
- loss or bereavement (such as death of close family member) – the request must include appropriate supporting documents or an explanation why these are not included
- hardship or trauma (such as being a victim of crime, severe disruption to domestic life) – the request must include appropriate supporting documents or an explanation why these are not included
- unforeseen call-up for service (such as military service, court appearance, Jury service, emergency service) – the request must include a letter from the relevant authority that includes specific dates
- unforeseen work commitments - the request must include a letter from the candidate's employer with specific dates on company/organisation letterhead
- unforeseen religious or cultural commitments - the request must include appropriate supporting documents such as a letter from a religious or cultural leader
- community emergency such as a natural disaster, bomb threat or similar such event necessitating the evacuation of the examination centre - no supporting documents are required with the request because Ahpra will verify the event.

Process for assessing requests for special consideration

Ahpra will assess requests for special consideration and determine the outcome within 28 calendar days of receiving the request.

Ahpra may use discretion in assessing requests for special consideration on medical and compassionate grounds and may decide additional details and supporting evidence such as a medical certificate or proof of compassionate circumstances are not required.

Ahpra may discuss the request for special consideration with the chair of the relevant Examination Committee.

If Ahpra considers that the request and supporting information satisfy the reasons for requesting special consideration set out in this policy, they will approve the request.

If Ahpra approves the request, the outcome may be:

- the candidate's examination date is re-scheduled without paying another fee, and/or
- the Board, NMAC and Ahpra will not consider the candidate's result for the affected examination as part of any future assessment and registration decisions.

If Ahpra considers that the request and supporting information do not satisfy the reasons for requesting special consideration set out in this policy, they will decline the request.

If the request is declined, the candidate's result will be recorded as a 'fail'. The exam fee will not be refunded, and the candidate will need to pay another exam fee if they want to sit the exam in the future.

Ahpra will inform the candidate in writing of the outcome of its assessment and provide reasons for that outcome.

In determining the outcome of its assessment, Ahpra will not:

- change a fail result to a pass result, or
- exempt a candidate from any requirements of the examination.

Ahpra will report on the outcome of its assessment of any requests for special consideration in an agenda paper at the next NMAC meeting after advising the candidate of the outcome.

If the candidate is dissatisfied with the outcome of Ahpra's assessment, they may apply for an examination committee (internal) review under the *Policy: Procedural review of examinations*. There are two reasons for requesting an examination committee review:

1. the candidate believes that the manner in which Ahpra assessed their special consideration request was procedurally unfair, and/or
2. the candidate believes that the outcome of Ahpra's assessment of their special consideration request is unfair or unreasonable on the basis of the available evidence.

Definitions

Special consideration is a process to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged if unplanned circumstances beyond their control adversely affect their ability to attend or complete their scheduled examination.

Associated documents

[NCLEX-RN MCQ Examination - Candidate Handbook](#)
[RN OSCE Examination - Candidate Handbook](#)

[Midwives MCQ Examination - Candidate Handbook](#)
[Midwives OSCE Examination - Candidate Handbook](#)

[Enrolled nurse MCQ Examination - Candidate Handbook](#)
[Enrolled nurse OSCE Examination - Candidate Handbook](#)

Document Control

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